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NEWS RELEASE

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California Courts Celebrate Mediation Week Starting Today

Public Benefits from Alternative to Trials; Studies Show Mediation Saves Time, Money

San Francisco—Starting today, California courts are celebrating Mediation Week, March 18-24, to honor the important role that mediation plays in the California court system by offering the public a way to resolve disputes other than going to trial.

In mediation, a neutral person helps the parties who are involved in a dispute discuss the issues and try to agree on a resolution.

“Over the past 25 years, court mediation has helped the public resolve thousands of cases outside the traditional court process,” said Chief Justice Ronald M. George. “This week, we recognize the special role that mediation has in providing high quality justice and service to the public and we honor the judicial officers, court staff, and community partners who make these programs possible.”

Here is how some courts are commemorating Mediation Week.

March 19-24: The Superior Court of Stanislaus County received a county Board of Supervisors’ resolution recognizing Mediation Week, on display at the Stanislaus County Mediation Center, 121 Downey Avenue, Suite 101-B, Modesto. The court will promote its mediation programs by distributing water bottles with the label “Your Dispute; Your Solution” and providing Web site addresses for more information; making presentations to local civic organizations; and showing a slide presentation about the court's ADR programs. For further information, contact Michael Tozzi, Court Executive Officer, 209-525-6348 or michael.tozzi@stanct.org.

March 19-23: The Superior Court of Monterey County will provide an informational table and court staff to answer the public's questions about court mediation services at its Civil Court Operations building, 1200 Aguajito Road, Monterey. For more information, contact Diane Valenzuela, 831-647-5810 or Diana.valenzuela@monterey.courts.ca.gov, or Lenor Noll, 831-647-5830 or Lenor.noll@monterey.courts.ca.gov.

March 19-20: The Superior Court of Fresno County will commemorate Mediation Week with two proclamations to be presented at the Clovis City Council meeting at 7 p.m. today, March 19, and at the Fresno City Council meeting at 8:30 p.m. tomorrow, March 20. In addition, the Central California Association of Conflict Resolution annual conference was held Saturday, March 17, at the San Joaquin College of Law. For more information, contact Mari Hansen, 559-488-2778 or mhenson@fresno.courts.ca.gov.

March 20-21: The Superior Court of Los Angeles County's Dispute Resolution Program will be honored by the county Board of Supervisors tomorrow, March 20. The court will hold a volunteer recognition event for its mediators from 3 to 5:30 p.m. on Wednesday, March 21, at the Stanley Mosk Courthouse, 111 North Hill Street, Room 222. Awards will be presented to volunteer mediators in civil, family law non-custody, probate, and civil harassment mediation programs. For more information contact Julie Bronson, 213-974-0558 or jbronson@lasuperiorcourt.org.

March 23: The Superior Court of Merced County will host several events to inform self-represented litigants about the availability and benefits of mediation and other ADR services, including an information booth (11 a.m. to 4 p.m.), a speaker's panel (1 p.m.), and a live demonstration of the mediation process (3 p.m.). Events will be held in Department F, 602 W. 20th Street. For more information, contact Dennis Morris, 209-725-4214 or Dennis.Morris@mercedcourt.org

BENEFITS OF MEDIATION

Litigants who participate in court mediation programs are usually very satisfied with the mediation process. The parties generally have a greater opportunity to discuss their concerns and more control over when and how their dispute is resolved than they would in a trial.

Studies have shown that court mediation programs save the parties time and money, improve satisfaction with the courts' services, and reduce future disputes and offenses. This allows courts to spend more time on cases that can not be resolved through mediation. The Legislature has found and declared that it is in the public's interest for mediation to be encouraged and used where appropriate by the courts. (California Code of Civil Procedure, section 1775 (c).)

The Judicial Council of California, the policy making body for the state courts, has declared the third week in March as Mediation Week to coincide with similar recognitions by the other public officials and agencies. The week is designed to increase public awareness of the availability and benefits of mediation programs and to recognize the efforts of those who make them successful.

For more information on Mediation Week and alternative dispute resolution, please visit the California Courts Web site at www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/adr/events.htm.

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